DRG LEARNING THEME: Transparency and Accountability

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The DRG Learning Agenda is a set of priority and strategic research questions for which the DRG Center generated evidence and produced recommendations to guide DRG programming in five cross-cutting thematic areas. DRG research on Transparency and Accountability answered questions related to how decentralization affects citizen participation, under what conditions internal and external accountability approaches are most successful, which efforts are most successful in curbing corruption, and others.

For more information, see the DRG Learning Agenda Overview and the Learning Agenda Evidence Rack-Up.

DRG Center Learning Agenda Findings

External vs. Internal Accountability

How well does external pressure from civil society organizations, media outlets, and citizen participation improve accountability and transparency compared to internal reforms within judicial and political institutions?

- The effects of internal and external accountability approaches—along with efficacy relative to one another—depend heavily on political, social, and economic context.
- Internal and external intervention models may interact with one another in complex ways; they sometimes complement one another, sometimes undermine one another, and sometimes operate independently.
- A variety of organizational forms, from diffuse social movement networks to NGOs and even private companies, can play key roles channeling external pressure toward government.
- Interventions that attempt to institutionalize accountability through external pressure within government agencies can help to catalyze citizens' political will into concrete changes to governance systems.

Key Documents: "Does Incorporating Participation and Accountability Improve Development Outcomes?"

Decentralization

In what ways might decentralization or deconcentration affect:
- (i) the nature of citizen participation in political processes;
- (ii) citizen support for the national government;
- (iii) policy outcomes;
- (iv) electoral accountability; and
- (v) service delivery quality?

- Decentralization may improve accountability and reduce corruption within government institutions by bringing them closer to the people and insulating them from elite capture at the national level (or at the provincial level in the case of decentralization within sub-national units).
- Conversely, decentralization may increase the scope for local-level elite capture, and thereby reduce accountability for non-elites. For more details, see this infographic.
- While decentralization programs usually focus on formal institutions, locally relevant and historically embedded informal or extra-state institutions may exert strong influence at the local level and should thus be a central consideration for decentralization policies and programs.

Key Documents: "Decentralized Governance and Accountability"; "Infographic/Brief-Decentralized Governance and Accountability"

Civil Service

In the context of hiring civil servants and providing positive and negative incentives for their behavior, what kinds of interventions are most effective at reducing the propensity of civil servants to engage in corruption?

- While many conceptual approaches and program frameworks have treated corruption as a problem of individual deviance, in many cases so-called corrupt behaviors represent alternative social orders that are integrated into the governmental social contract to most effectively ameliorate inequity and injustice.

- Successful efforts to curb corruption within government bureaucracies have tended to involve efforts that address multiple systemic problems across the state apparatus at once, assistance to citizens in navigating bureaucracies, and/or efforts to thoroughly reform a particular state organization or set of organizations.

Key Documents: "Combatting Corruption Among Civil Servants"

E-Governance

Does the introduction of e-governance (e.g., computerized case management) improve the performance of, and increase public confidence in, public institutions—e.g., the justice system?

- Although research on the topic is new and continues to evolve, studies so far show substantial promise for e-governance strategies.

- As indicated by the only impact evaluation in the rack-up centrally focused within this research question, e-governance platforms do not necessarily lead to noticeable changes in service delivery, even when citizens make use of them; additional enforcement mechanisms may be needed to ensure accountability.

Key Documents: "Combatting Corruption Among Civil Servants"

Legend

Learning questions addressed by DRG research

Learning questions partially addressed by DRG research

Learning questions not yet addressed by DRG research

DRG Center Research by Category

	All	Evidence Review	Survey	Impact Eval.	Performance Eval.	
TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY	43	27	2	9	5	
External vs. internal accountability	33	18	2	9	4	
Decentralization	3	2	0	0	1	
Civil service	7	3	0	3	1	
E-Governance	2	1	0	1	0	

0   10   20   30   40   50